ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S NOVEL

THE FIRST CIRCLE

by

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ERRATA

p. 5 Line 13 from top: read "dictatorship."

p. 8 Footnotes: An error has occurred in the final typescript. The reader will observe that footnotes have been numbered consecutively from the beginning of the INTRODUCTION through CHAPTER II. CHAPTER III and the CONCLUSION have footnotes numbered in separate series.

p. 12 Final line of text: read "stable" for "static."

p. 24 In the quotation the word "chrezvychainykh" should be so spelled with a single "n".

p. 33 Line 12 from top: read "class" for "category."

p. 36 In the first quotation read "prisel" for "pricel."

p. 37 Line 1: read "variant" for "variation."

p. 39 Line 2: omit "spetsodezhda."

p. 71 Line 7 from bottom: read "Marxian" for "Marxist."
ABSTRACT

The Russian novel V kruge pervom (The First Circle) shows its author, Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, to be a socially conscious writer and a man who is acutely aware of the spiritual dilemmas of modern man. The ethical questions to which he devotes himself in this novel are placed within the context of a moral philosophy which derives its essence from the Slavophiles of the nineteenth century. As a critic of modern tendencies, Solzhenitsyn is agitated about a lack of interest in man as an individual. The essential message conveyed by the novel is that man is in a materialistic impasse, and the way out of that impasse resides in a greater understanding of his functions as a human being. The author deprecates any system of thought and organized mode of life which tends to take a mechanistic view of man and to depersonalize the basis of human relations. As the symbolic conscience of modern Russia, he restores to Russian literature the humanism and moral universalism which characterized the tradition of critical realism of the previous century.

For Solzhenitsyn freedom is a spiritual matter. The right to speak freely and to publish one's thoughts is not, for him, just as it was not for the Slavophiles before him,
a political right, but a natural endowment. His courageous defence of this principle and his unwavering loyalty to and pursuit of Truth have won him international respect, which culminated in the award of the Nobel Prize in 1970. In its literary and philosophical qualities, The First Circle (and all his published work) distinguishes Solzhenitsyn from his contemporaries as the leading prosaist of the Soviet Union. The First Circle is genuine realism, the very antithesis of the contrived novels which dominate Soviet prose under that ruinous prescription of "socialist realism."

This thesis is presented in an introduction, three central chapters and a conclusion. The INTRODUCTION traces the background and setting of the novel. CHAPTER I turns to its structure and style. CHAPTER II treats the language of the camps and prisons. The First Circle is a rare source of this slang diction and is therefore a valuable contribution to linguistics. CHAPTER III examines the problems of ethics which disturb the author and which are considered to be the most important side of his novel. The CONCLUSION summarizes Solzhenitsyn's significance as a modern author and comments on his defence of freedom of speech and the creative word.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the Russian novel *V kruge pervom* (The First Circle) by Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn. This novel, and most of the author's work published to date, can only be appreciated against the background of the tragic events which engendered it, for Solzhenitsyn's works are intensely autobiographical.

During the Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) hostilities towards the end of the Second World War, Solzhenitsyn, then an artillery captain, was summoned by the commander of his division, stripped of rank and decorations and arrested. He explains:

I was arrested because of my naïve and childish ideas. I knew that it was forbidden to write of military matters in letters from the front, but I thought it was permitted to think and reflect on events. For a long time I had been sending a friend letters clearly criticizing Stalin though without mentioning his name. I thought he had betrayed Leninism and was responsible for the defeats of the first phase of the war, that he was a weak theoretician and that his language was primitive. In my youthful recklessness I put all these thoughts down on paper.¹

The correspondence of which he speaks was intercepted by an agency known as SMERSH, whose operatives took him into cus-

tody. He was confined in the Lubyanka prison in Moscow and, in July 1945, sentenced without trial to an eight-year term of imprisonment in the corrective-labour camps by the OSSO, Stalin's notorious tribunal attached to the NKVD. At first he was employed on construction building an apartment block for secret police officials. When it was discovered that he held a university degree in mathematics and physics, he was sent to a special scientific research institute.

It was this first experience with the hellish world of GULAG that inspired The First Circle. The novel was nine years in the composing (1955-1964), but made its appearance in the West only in 1968. The manuscript was confiscated by the KGB in 1965, which Solzhenitsyn boldly condemned in his now famous letter to the Fourth Congress of Soviet Writers.

The available editions of Solzhenitsyn's novels The First Circle and Cancer Ward (Rakovyi korpus) were prepared from clandestine manuscripts received through samizdat, the literary underground. These novels have not been published in the Soviet Union, where a ban on his work began in 1966. Even his first published story, Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich), which brought him international fame when it appeared in 1962, has been withdrawn from Soviet libraries. Soviet readers have access to Solzhenitsyn's works only in typescript form as they circulate throughout the underground.
Solzhenitsyn's works are no longer published in his own country because they do not teach the Party line. Since they are critical of Soviet life and governmental policies, too outspoken in their appraisal of the revolution, and ask more probing questions about the "errors" of the Stalin era than the present leadership cares to answer, they draw fire from the conformist critics. Solzhenitsyn's vigorous battle for creative freedom is now a matter of record. Following a series of slanderous attacks on him by the Soviet press, he was expelled from the Writers' Union in 1969.

Comparing the settings of Solzhenitsyn's works with those of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, the critic K. Pomerantsev observes:

Tolstoy's world is the normal world of normal people. Dostoyevsky's world is also the normal world, but abnormal people live in it. The world of Solzhenitsyn, however, is an abnormal world in which normal people must live.²

In The First Circle this abnormal world is the sharashka at Mavrino. Here in suburban Moscow the MGB has established a clandestine scientific research institute operating within a spetstyur'ma which accommodates 281 inmates. One of these prisoners remarks: "If a war starts, they'll mow us down en masse or infect our kasha with plague." (3:92)³ This was not

²See his article: "Dobro i zlo u Solzhenitsyna," in Novyi Zhurnal (The New Review), No. 95 (July 1969), p. 149.

³The method of quoting is explained below.
mere ostentatious contempt for the Soviet government of the time. In 1917 Stalin personally ordered that the political offenders be collected into osoblagi in order to facilitate their being put to death in the event of another war.⁴

In The First Circle Solzhenitsyn has metaphorically recaptured the artistic vision of the Inferno, wherein the souls of the pre-Christian philosophers are doomed to eternal oblivion in Limbo, the First of the Nine Circles in the conical structure of Hell conceived by Dante. The analogies are striking. Solzhenitsyn's conception of a paranoid, vindictive, yet pathetic evil genius of penology (Stalin) is a cunningly wrought representation of the sinister and writhing Satan, the Emperor of Dante's Realm of Sorrow. The wise men of antiquity were confined in a "Noble Castle," and the elite of Soviet science are exploited intellectually in the "Enchanted Castle," the Mavrino Institute. Dante's Limbo is a home for the unsanctified, while Mavrino accommodates the initiates of the "cult of personality."

The intellectual competence of the pagan scientists may have influenced Dante's epic judgment, for Limbo is the most comfortable of his Circles. The better treatment given the Mavrino prisoners, however, is motivated by expediency:

a sense of well-being is the \textit{sine qua non} of a concentrated
and sustained mental effort which, in turn, is vital to the
success of the laboratory projects at the Institute. Or, as
the facetious Pryanchikov expresses it, "It has been proved
that a large wool clip depends upon the feeding and care of
the sheep." (3:15)

The status of Solzhenitsyn's "ovine" collective may
be less humble than that of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov and his
innocent labour-camp comrades, but as so-called "enemies of
the people," they bear the same mark of disgrace imposed by
Article 58, the most notorious statute in the Criminal Code
of the RSFSR, as that code stood until repealed in December
1958. These unfortunate victims of the Stalin distatorship
have been rounded up for the engineering tasks at hand from
the lower circles of the infernal GULAG realm, whither most
of them will be dispatched when the job is completed, which
in itself signals their redundancy. Such is the setting.

The underlying theme is human suffering, which runs
through much Russian fiction of recent years. Boris Paster-
nak's \textit{Doctor Zhivago} and Lidiya Chukovskaya's \textit{Opustelyi dom}
(\textit{The Deserted House}) are eminent illustrations. The bitter-
ness of suffering through injustice does not merely connect
the novel with Solzhenitsyn's private world; it becomes the
cornerstone of a structurally complex work of art. This art
form permits the author to delve into the personal world of
each of his characters. It conforms to the requirements of Solzhenitsyn's favourite genre - the "polyphonic" novel, in which there are no heroes in the traditional sense. For, as Solzhenitsyn points out, "Every character becomes main when the action reverts to him."\(^5\)

Solzhenitsyn's early stories were keenly criticized for the alignment of the forces of good and evil which were represented by the characters.\(^6\) Although this alignment of forces exists (and justifiably) in The First Circle, such a neat division of its completely "Stalinized" world into two antagonistic groups would be arbitrary and superficial, for the characters are not simply either "righteous" or "evil."

The deuteragonist, Lev Rubin, is portrayed sympathetically, although his materialist ideology is alien to Solzhenitsyn. Moreover, the situations of free and unfree, tormentors and tormented, manipulators and manipulated, guards and prison-


\(^6\)By V. Chalmayev in "'Saints' and 'Devils','" trans. in Priscilla Johnson, Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1965, p. 272. [The original article appeared in Russian in Oktyabr, No. 10, 1963.] Chalmayev observes: "In the world of A. Solzhenitsyn's characters two ideological and moral poles and two sets of characters corresponding to these poles stand out quite distinct­ly. In one of them the writer invariably concentrates humility and meekness, righteousness that as a rule is impotent in practice, and in the other he concentrates all-powerful evil, overbearing cruelty, and blind obedience."
ers, victors and victims, are truly relative. This is the effect created by the shifting scene: the action oscillates between the sharashka and Moscow at large. The implication is that Solzhenitsyn considers the difference between these two worlds one of degree, not of kind.

This thesis does not enter into discussion of those elements of political criticism contained in Solzhenitsyn's works. Although this aspect of his novels is important in a complete exegesis, the historical conditions which prompted it will alter, and his work will be judged in the future by literary criteria alone. Therefore this essay concentrates on the literary qualities of The First Circle. But it tries also to assess Solzhenitsyn's philosophical point of view.

The thesis is presented in three principal chapters and a conclusion. CHAPTER I treats some of the problems of structure and analyzes the dominant characteristics of Solzhenitsyn's prose method. The emphasis is on the syntactic devices and figurative turns of speech which are considered to be the distinguishing characteristics of his mode of expression. CHAPTER II collects and classifies the slang diction of the concentration camps and prisons and comments on the problem of obscenity. CHAPTER III approaches the moral philosophy which runs through the novel and which separates

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Solzhenitsyn from his Soviet contemporaries. The CONCLUSION summarizes Solzhenitsyn's importance as a modern writer.

There are two appendices. In APPENDIX I the transliteration system used in transcribing the Russian is given in tabular form. APPENDIX II is a glossary of words, terms and contractions which have been used in the thesis without explanation, including those in the INTRODUCTION.

The footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout each chapter. For convenience the notes have been placed at the foot of the same page on which the superscript appears.

The SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY lists the most useful and relevant materials for a study of Solzhenitsyn. It excludes the slanderous journalistic articles which are no more than invective and which therefore have little academic value.

All quotations are taken from the following edition of Solzhenitsyn's fiction: Sobraniye sochinenii [Collected Works], 6 volumes, Frankfurt/Main: Possev, 1970. Fictional references are indicated parenthetically within the text of the thesis thus: (3:92) refers to Volume 3, Page 92. Citations of nonfictional sources included in this same edition are given in the footnotes under the heading Works. All the quotations are transcribed in the original Russian in those sections which treat diction and style. In the other parts of the thesis the excerpts have been rendered into English. For the accuracy of translation I bear full responsibility.
The artistic conception of *The First Circle* is very impressive: it works at many levels and ranges in space and time. Superficially, it examines the prison experience and the reactions and adjustments of several men to its regime. This is the novel of a humanist and humanitarian. With the force of the nineteenth-century critical realists, it seeks truth, social justice and a philosophical point of support, and evinces a profound sympathy with the human condition. A critical appraisal of Soviet reality in the Stalin era constitutes yet another level. Such a vast undertaking raises serious artistic difficulties: looseness of narrative, lack of plot unity, and the general unfinished appearance of the form are some of the imperfections which have been observed by critics.

Unlike *Cancer Ward*, which is unified by the central problem of the disease itself, *The First Circle* has no concentrated plot to which everything is contributive and subordinate. The only true plot is to be found in the separate
thread of the novel devoted to Innokentii Volodin. But this thread embraces only nine chapters and has the character of a short story in itself. For aesthetic appreciation of The First Circle Aristotelian prejudices must be abandoned; the work is best examined without reference to any fixed structural principles which might be thought to characterize the novel as an individual literary genre.

Solzhenitsyn compensates for the absence of a major plot with mutually reinforcing themes which combine to present a comprehensive picture of life in Stalin's Russia. In this sense the parts of the novel are contributive and subordinate to the author's intention. Obviously, in The First Circle Solzhenitsyn is less concerned with design than with content (concerning the ideas and emotions conveyed), while his skilful combining of realism and symbolism and language mastery are aesthetically pleasing aspects of the novel.

This is not to say that there is a complete absence of artistic design, but that The First Circle is fragmented in structure. There is coherence, for the central motive is never lost to view. There are elements of unity external to considerations of plot: as Deming Brown points out, structural coherence resides in part in the consistently downward impulse in the fate of the principal characters.8 There is

artistic unity also in the portrait gallery which is "carefully designed and meticulously integrated," although the surfeit of details compressed into a seventy-hour time span has the effect of complicating the reader's perception, and the characters occasionally seem to have submerged into the amorphous mass of sub-plot incidents.

The very magnitude of Solzhenitsyn's self-appointed task prevents the fusing of his heterogeneous themes into a unified whole. The more than fifty characters who comprise the dramatis personae represent a wide variety of points of view. These cannot be examined in detail in this fragmented structure. Yet in this connection too the novel is redeemed in part by the fervour and the historical and human authenticity of the narrative.

The First Circle may be compared to a cinematograph projecting a sequence of "stills" in rapid succession. This technique is an inherent feature of Solzhenitsyn's literary method. The fragmentary presentation to which it gives rise in this novel consists of approximately seventy scenes. The scenic effect does not allow for the complete psychological and philosophical illumination of character which is one of the distinguishing features of Russian classical literature in general and of Tolstoy's method in particular. And while

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 309.\]
Solzhenitsyn rivals his predecessor in his ability to apply the psychological method - and, on occasion, even surpasses him, *The First Circle* is not a successful work in this way. The second novel *Cancer Ward* is again superior in its examination of man in crisis.

One important exception is Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of the simple Russian peasant: Spiridon Yegorov is a living resurrection of Platon Karatayev of Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*. Each is a "jack of all trades" (like Ivan Shukhov in the concentration camp), and reacts to situations spontaneously; each has an innocent and youthful expression, and is portrayed in the light of that peculiar unfathomability and instinctive behaviour which have always puzzled the Russian intellectual and which have been at the same time the cause of his great admiration. Platon's proverbial "Where there's judgment, there there's falsehood,"\(^\text{10}\) sounds like Spiridon's "That's why there's a devil - to judge the priests."\(^\text{3:189}\) And Tolstoy's description of Platon as an "everlasting personification of the spirit of simplicity and truth" is just as applicable to Spiridon, and even to Ivan Shukhov.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 906.
motivated individuals. Each one is described physically and given a biography. The reader observes each one's behaviour in the (predominantly male) collective and his relationship with his fellows. Yet it is only the principals who are revealed fully and realized as in life. The group of rounded characters includes Nerzhin, his wife Nadya, Rubin, Stalin, Volodin and Yegorov. Those who might be considered "flat," were it not for some individualizing marks, include the two kumy or operatives (Shikin and Myshin), the Party Secretary (Stepanov), the Head of the Prison (Klimentiev), the Junior Lieutenant (Nadelashin), the Serbian Marxist (Radovich), the Prosecutor (Makarygin), and the prisoners Potapov, Adamson, Kondrashev-Ivanov and Kagan. Between these categories there is a third group including the prisoners Sologdin, Doronin, and Gerasimovich, the Head and Deputy Head of the Institute Yakonov and Roitman, the writer Galakhov, the Prosecutor's daughter Klara Makarygin and the Minister Victor Abakumov.

If the secondary and tertiary characters often seem transitory, as Brown has suggested, it may be due in part to the lack of a prominent plot to which they could relate. But it is also attributable to the fact that each character is a thematic embodiment of an ideological or philosophical point of view, and the space of a chapter (or part thereof)

12 Brown, op. cit., p. 311.
does not facilitate complete illumination. Ivan Dyrsin, for example, is assigned no fictional role. His sole purpose is to reveal the absurdities and inconsistencies of the entire era. (The administration requests him to write a "cheerful reply" (bodryi otvet) to the pessimistic letters of his now despondent wife, and even to advise her to believe in God!) But this looseness of structure has one artistic advantage: removal of one or another "character-theme" does not reduce the stylistic effectiveness of the novel. But the effect of the finished picture of Soviet life presented by the author would have been markedly diminished.

In terms of structure the most significant parts of the novel are Chapter 1, Chapter 55 (approximately central) and the concluding lines of the epilogue.

The first chapter is a prologue which serves to set the atmosphere of suspicion and fear which grips Moscow and to initiate the action of the framework story of Innokentii Volodin. This dramatic story constitutes the narrative fabric of the novel. In his official capacity as a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Volodin has learned of the danger threatening his mother's former physician, Dr Dobro-umov, who has carelessly promised to share a recent medical discovery with foreign colleagues. Volodin warns him on the telephone, and the call is recorded on tape. (The doctor is under surveillance.) Volodin's act enhances the importance
of the laboratory work at Mavrino, where attempts are being made to raise phonoscopy to the level of a science with the same reliability as dactyloscopy. The substance of the Mavrino action traces the evolution of a voice-encoding device which has been ordered by Stalin, and which is brought into play in the effort to distinguish the caller from the other suspects.

The story-line is acted out in about seventy hours. The time is the Christmas period of 1949: from 4:05 p.m. on Saturday (24 December) to around noon on Tuesday (27 December). From the initiation of the action to the climax with Volodin's arrest, the incidents in brief are as follows. At around 4:15 p.m. on Christmas Eve Volodin phones Dobroumov. The call is recorded. At midnight Abakumov meets with Oskolupov, Sevastyanov and Yakonov to discuss the Mavrino work. At ten o'clock on Christmas Day Rubin hears the taped call, and receives the list of five suspects. Around six o'clock Volodin calls Makarygin's apartment; since he is one of the five suspects, his telephone is being tapped. The recording is delivered to Rubin for comparison with the first one. At 3:15 p.m. on 26 December Rubin declares that phonoscopy has a "rational core," and he exculpates three of the suspects. Volodin is arrested around six o'clock.

It is in Chapter 55 that Volodin uses his telephone to call the Makarygin apartment. His sister-in-law, Klara,
who is a free employee in the vacuum laboratory at Mavrino, answers the telephone. At this point, with the coincidence of Dickens, a few threads of the plot converge. Klara is in love with the prisoner Ruska Doronin who, hating privilege, has aroused her social consciousness and turned her against her own "class." She realizes that her father has convicted (on order) a number of innocent men. And, finally, there is the seemingly absurd "interference" of the convict Rubin in the life of the diplomat. These "coincidences" are regarded by Heinrich Böll as the device of a mathematician. He calls it "a macabre tribute to the classical novel."\(^{13}\)

The closing lines of the novel provide some insight into Solzhenitsyn's attitudes. A French correspondent, seeing a delivery van inscribed MEAT in four languages, remembers having seen others throughout the day. He jots down in his notebook that Moscow is well provisioned. The van is a camouflaged Black Maria in which twenty prisoners are being transported from the sharashka back to the camps. It seems significant that Solzhenitsyn chose to end his novel with a "wholesale box on the ear for Occidental stupidity."\(^{14}\) This

\(^{13}\)He writes: "Nur in diesen beiden [sic] Kapiteln, die genau in der Mitte des Romans liegen, und das ist bei einem Mathematiker gewiß kein Zufall, wird dem klassischen Roman ein makabrer Zoll gezahlt, wird Schicksal 'zusammengeführt'." Böll, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 480.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 476.
tongue-in-cheek incident advertises the super-secrecy which enveloped Stalin's operations. But it serves a second purpose: it assembles the threads of the Slavophile philosophy which courses through the novel.

If the narrative looseness of *The First Circle* is a source of aesthetic dissatisfaction, the style of the novel redeems it. This section examines Solzhenitsyn's characteristic mode of expression, which has won him critical respect as the leading stylist of contemporary Russian prose. This problem is too complex to deal with it fully. The aim here is to survey the syntactic devices and figurative system of his work. Though the fundamental point of reference is the novel *The First Circle*, the discussion is supplemented with examples from other works. In this way it is hoped to avoid superficiality.

Several scholarly articles have been devoted to the problem at hand. These are all linguistically oriented and mixed in character, dealing with problems of both style and diction. It is useful to summarize very briefly the content of each. The Soviet linguist, T. G. Vinokur, in his paper, "О языке и стиле повести А.И.Солженицына Однажды Ивана Денисовича," has treated the various speech levels of this novella and some of its *skaz* elements in an attempt to show
the inner unity of its verbal-figurative composition. The brief review article by Ludmila Koehler, "Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Russian Literary Tradition," compares Leskov and Solzhenitsyn and introduces some of the linguistic and syntactic devices of his early stories. Leonid Rzhevsky has contributed two papers to the discussion. The first, "Obraz rasskazchika v povesti Solzhenitsyna Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha," examines the language of both narrator and central character of the story and shows where Solzhenitsyn departs from the skaz. The second, "Tvorcheskoye slovo u Solzhenitsyna," is a general discussion of some of Solzhenitsyn's successes and failures as he searches for expressive forms. The article stresses the Russian folk speech and colloquial spontaneity of his prose. Finally, in his paper "'Lager-nyi yazyk' po proizvedeniym A. I. Solzhenitsyna," E. Shilyayev provides an introductory discussion of certain morphological categories of camp language and classifies various grammatical forms. While all these studies have produced

15 In Voprosy kul'tury rechi, Vypusk 6, Moskva: Izdatel' stvo "Nauka," 1965, pp. 16-32.
18 Novyi Zhurnal, No. 96 (September 1969), pp. 76-90.
19 Novyi Zhurnal, No. 95 (June 1969), pp. 232-47.
valuable results, the question of syntax and figurative devices requires further investigation.

The stylistic feature which distinguishes the prose under examination here is its straightforward quality. The labour-camp tale particularly is a controlled, ascetically-executed report on human fortitude in a hostile milieu. In Solzhenitsyn's reproduction of the camp tragedy there is no cry of outraged dignity. The extremely subtle irony is evident only in the twists and turns of the fate of the central character. In the later novels Solzhenitsyn is less restrained: irony abounds in various shades of intensity, and "the element of combative abusiveness" is more marked.20

The characteristic property of the syntactic design is laconicism. The conciseness which can be observed in the chapters and paragraphs of The First Circle is also typical of its sentences. Each statement conveys only the essential information. This procedure is followed whether the comment renders a personal opinion on a life phenomenon or a social or political judgment. Strict avoidance of elaboration and the striving for candor impose a search for stylistic means whereby emotion can be communicated. Exclamations and verb-omissions, which are distinctive marks of elliptical syntax, are commonly employed. Some examples are the following:

- 20 -

**Summa summarum** stalinskogo pravosudiya! (4:512)

Budushcheye obshchestvo! O nyom govorili tak legko! (4:435)

Eto byl pocherk Stalina! - to velikolepnoye uravneniye druzei i vragov, kotoroye vydelyalo yego izo vsei chelovecheskoj istorii! (3:223)

This elliptical construction is particularly adaptable to the mental action of the characters, where it serves in the immediate transmission of a thought or an idea. For example: "Gospodi! Svoimi nogami - da na volyu, a?" (1:52)

In the following passage (from *Cancer Ward*), this technique has facilitated the author's compressing of several actions into one; the effect is not seriously reduced by the interposed parenthesis: "Teper': klei - devushke, meshok - v ruki (on mezhdu nogami vsyo vremya, chtob ne uperli), pis'ma - v yashchik, a samomu - begom!" (2:587)

Ellipsis is one of the properties which give to the prose of the labour-camp story its distinguished character. To achieve the desired artistic effects, the syntax must be subordinated to the popular-folk orientation of the village speech of the main character. Therefore deviations from the normal syntax occur.\(^{21}\) The sentence may lose a conjunction or gain an interjection:

Vidit Shukhov - zametalsya Tsezar', tyk-myk, da pozdno. (1:124)

\(^{21}\) These are treated by L. Rzhevsky in "Obraz rasskazchika . . .", *op. cit.*, p. 169.
Another distinctive mark of Solzhenitsyn's laconicism is its proverbial bent. The concentration-camp story is inspired by the wisdom of sayings and by-words which convey the rudimentary Weltanschauung of the unpretentious peasant and his observations on the conditions of prison life. Here the conciseness of the syntax has that quality which Burton Rubin describes as "staccato brevity." This is the effect produced by judgments delivered in passing. Since the point of view is that of a simple peasant, genuine proverbiality is achieved by rendering the verb in final position. After the method of Rzhevsky, three fundamental categories may be distinguished.

Two borrowings from Vladimir Dal's Poslovitsy russkogo naroda (Moskva: GIKhL, 1957) are in the first class:

Kryakhti da gnis'. A upryosh'sya - perelomish'sya. (1:40)
Bryukho - zlodei, starogo dobra ne pomnit. . . . (1:112)

The members of the second group are variations of types already existing in the language:

Ispytok ne ubytok. . . . (1:7)

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Stylistically, the third category is the most important, for its components testify to Solzhenitsyn's originality in the field of popular-folk phraseology. The following aphoristic judgments on the phenomena of camp life show that the narrator has penetrated completely the mind of the central figure:

Vkalyvai na sovest' - odno spaseniye.  
Dlya lyudei delayesh' - kachestvo dai, dlya duraka delayesh' - dai pokazukhu.  
Ne vykusish' - ne vyprosish'.  
Dvesti gramm zhizn'yu pravyat.  
Miski nesti - ne rukavom tryasti.  
Khuzhe net, kak bryukho rastravish', da popustu.  
Kak vot bystraya voshka vsegda pervaya na grebeshok popadayet.

Solzhenitsyn occasionally employs the proverb as a didactic vehicle. While the transport from Mavrino is getting under way, Khorobrov's comment affirms the moral rightness of the prisoners' refusals to cooperate in the laboratory schemes: "Net, rebyata - luchshe khleb s vodoi, chem pirog s bedoi." (4:803) And Spiridon Yegorov's instinctive reaction to the problem of good and evil is a reproduction of the folk att-
Solzhenitsyn's chosen unit of responsibility in *The First Circle* is the sentence rather than the paragraph. The sentence is designed to focus the reader's attention on one thing at a time. Therefore all the necessary information on the matter at hand is given at the same time. If additional information is required, it is usually reported in a parenthesis; Solzhenitsyn rarely puts it in a separate sentence. The multiplicity of single-sentence paragraphs in *The First Circle* may be attributed to this device.

To promote in the paragraphs the laconic properties of the sentences, various techniques are used. For example, Solzhenitsyn brilliantly exploits the predilection for participial constructions in colloquial speech. The following nonperiodic sentence-paragraph drawn from the initial scene of the novel is an excellent illustration:

*Nezatumanennyye dvoinyye stekla vysokogo okna, nachinayushchegosya ot samogo pola, otkryvali glazu gde-to vnizu toroplivoye snovaniye ulitsy i dvornikov, sgrebavshikh tol'ko chto vypavshii, no uzhe otyazhelevshii, korichnevo-gryaznyi sneg iz-pod nog peshekhodov.* (3:5)

Common features of the longer sentences are strings of verb forms and repetitions. These devices assist in the characterizing of Andrei Potapov, where the repetitions lay stress on his morning habits:

*Potapov iz pervykh vstal, gulyal, iz pervykh pozavtrakal, uzhe popil i chayu, uzhe zapravil koiku v*
This passage also exemplifies Solzhenitsyn's inclination to substitute an independent proposition for a causal clause.

The complex syntactic period is frequently a source of aesthetic pleasure. The property which characterizes the excerpt introduced below is its double intonation, in which the parenthesis does service as a rhythmic pause to balance the logically stressed members of the sentence.

The scene has two levels of action which operate simultaneously: while Nadelashin delivers the report, the author, as the omniscient narrator, attracts the reader's attention by interjecting. The parenthetic humour does double duty: it makes a show of Nadelashin's discomposure and utter ineptitude in the presence of his superior, and it subtly derides the whole bureaucratic proceeding.

Solzhenitsyn's penchant for brevity guides the figurative system of his work. He does not experiment in this field, and as a result his comparisons are often commanding.
Like Tolstoy, he does not resort to figurative language for aesthetic effects. Instead, these are created by eloquence. His metaphors are distinguished by originality, and the more expressive of them are underlain by coarse humour. The camp story contains the following examples:

**namordnik dorozhnyi.** In prison jargon the *namordnik* is a "muzzle," a screen placed over the cell window to conceal the view, yet admit light. In the combination here it signifies a bit of rag to "muzzle" the prisoner's face against the bitter cold as he goes out to work beyond the camp confines: "Namordnik dorozhnyi, tryapochka, za dorogu vsya otmokla ot dykhaniya i koi-gde morozom prikhvatilas', korkoi stala ledyanoi." (1:35)

**bushlat derevyannyi.** This expression, which comes from Russian thieves' cant, finds its English counterpart in the "wooden overcoat" of underworld slang. "Doktora eti v bushlat derevyannyi lechat." (1:93)

A final example is the following metonymical description of the 104th brigade as "bryukhi pustyye poyasami brezentovymi zatyanuty." (1:45)

The Bolshaya Lubyanka prison in Moscow is described in such a way as to contribute to the atmosphere of impending doom which prevails around Volodin. The combination of metaphor and simile imparts to it a threatening aspect and, it seems, presents it as a symbol of Stalin's Terror: "Eta
Solzhenitsyn's metaphors are often employed for the purpose of irony. The description of the novel *Far From Us* is sarcastic in the extreme and has the effect ofexcluding socialist realism from literature: "Eta kniga byla - pirog bez nachinki, yaitso s vytekshim soderzhimym, chuchelo ot ubitoi ptitsy..." (3:324)

Similes are much more numerous in his works. These too are precise and simple, and are particularly successful in conveying the harshness of prison life. In many of them Solzhenitsyn exploits pathos. The visual imagery and sense appeal are poignant in the following examples:

... kozha na litse - kak kora dubovaya. (1:36)

... okruzhili tu pechku, kak babu, vse obnimat' lezut. (1:54)

... kashitsui... k nei so svyashchennym trepetom priobrashchayesh'sya, prichashchayesh'sya! - kak k toi prane iogovi (3:49)

Solzhenitsyn has a keen sensibility to the ordinary phenomena of life. His description of the young Klara Makarygin in the hands of destiny reveal that delicacy of feeling: "Ona ne byla vinovata, chto nastupilo yeyo poslednye predel'noye sozrevaniye i neumolimym zakonom prirody ona dolzhna byla, kak sentyabr'skoye yabloko, upast' v ruki to-
Soviet officials are treated with the contempt they deserve. At the beginning of *The First Circle* the ministers of the government are suitably diminished for the amusement of the reader: "Znaya nochnyye povadki vladyki, vse shest'desyatkov ministrov, kak shkol'niki, bdyat v ozhidanii vy-zova." (3:6)

The Christian resonance which underlies the following simile from *Cancer Ward* is particularly striking. Here Solzhenitsyn mentions the ease with which exiles and former camp martyrs recognize each other: "Khotya ne bylo im uch-rezhdeno sredi ostal'nykh ni pogon, ni yavnoi formy, ni narukavnoi povyazki, - a oni legko opoznavaли drug druga: kak budto po kakomu-to svetyashchemusya znaku vo lbu; kak budto po stigmatam na kostyakh ladoni i plyusny." (2:525) It is, perhaps, a tribute to the artistry that the symbolism needs no elaboration.

The rhythm of the longer passages in *The First Circle* is attributable in large part to Solzhenitsyn's faculty for finding the correct combination of words. This felicity can be seen in his choice of epithets. There is nothing unexpected or surprising in his selection of metaphorical adjectives in the following extract; indeed, their particular aptness resides in their very usualness (if their frequency in poetic diction is considered): ". . . moskvichi, priyez-
zhayushchiye po voskres'ym v roshchu, ne mogli by pred-
stavit', skol'ko nezauryadnikh zhiznei, rastoptannykh pory-
vov, vzmetennykh strastei i gosudarstvennykh tain bylo sob-
rano, stisnuto, spleteno i dokrasna nakaleno v etom podgo-
rodnom odinokom starinnom zdanii [My italics]." (3:280) The
effectiveness of the first three elements in the italicized
sequence above is enhanced by their being placed syntactically parallel with the fourth expression, the anticlimactic "gosudarstvennye tainy."

Passages of pure description often have the quality of prose poetry. The vivid imagery of the phrase "shchedryi tsarstvenyi inei" (3:183), for example, has the same fineness of perception which distinguishes the prose poems, the Krokhotnyye rasskazy. And, whatever the purpose, the epithets applied to the description of Yakonov's office have the distinctive signs of poetic expression: "... v barkhatis-toi tishine i polirovannom uyute kabineta. ..." (3:271)

When the scene changes from the sanctuary of nature to the infernal Siberian "underworld," the language of poetry is, appropriately, forsaken. The epithets, however, remain pertinent. For example: "V etom ledyanom mire, kotoryi ... otshtampoval Olegu dushu. ...," (2:524) "vol'chi zakony GULAGa" (3:95) and many others.

Solzhenitsyn's prose is never formal or oratorical; embellished language finds no place in his style. His prose
is candid, sincere and honest; it does not have the sophistication of much Western literature. The sincerity resides in his striving for the spontaneity of colloquial and popular phraseology. His skilful use of new grammatical forms, dialectal and archaic expressions and neologisms (including slightly modified borrowings from Vladimir Dal', words and phrases used with semantic change and others constructed by affixation) acts as a restorative and makes a valuable contribution to the contemporary literary language.

It has not been possible in this essay to deal with all problems of style. Those questions which still require investigating include dialogue structure (which contributes in important measure to the drama of the novel), the use of symbol, the related problem of ironic tone, and the effects of vocabulary and phraseology on syntactic structure.
The primary purpose of this chapter is to deal with the diction of the prisons and concentration camps as it is set down by Solzhenitsyn. His two works One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich and The First Circle are rich sources of the vocabulary in question. The reticence of the government about the system of compulsory labour impedes investigation in this branch of linguistics. Perhaps understandably, the censors do not publish works treating politically sensitive themes. Exceptionally, a few stories and articles appeared during the so-called "thaw" of the early 1960s. These works (including Solzhenitsyn's first story) are an embarrassment to the present leaders of the Soviet Union.

Since Solzhenitsyn was imprisoned under Article 58, he served his sentence in special institutions reserved for political offenders: four years in a special prison such as Mavrino, four years in a special camp. Therefore his novels do not furnish the linguist with a complete lexicon of camp language. The written testimony of former inmates indicates that word usage varied regionally, and Solzhenitsyn's works do not include some of the variants. Nevertheless, his con-
The inhabitants of the penal institutions came from diverse social environments and different walks of life and were of various political and religious persuasions and educational levels. It is not surprising that the language of the camps developed into a peculiar linguistic conglomerate which derived its components from the jargon of professions and trades, official nomenclature, the slang of the "underworld" (the thieves' cant known as blatnaya muzyka) and the slang elements which evolved inside the barbed wire itself. Prison-camp slang proper and the popular-vulgar elements of everyday speech are no doubt mobile and mutually replenishing categories; therefore they cannot be distinguished with certainty. This essay employs the method of classifying and exemplifying Solzhenitsyn's use of various word groups.

1. Nouns and Substantives

Camp jargon has been highly productive in the field of noun formation. The large number of neologisms that have developed in the era of the camps shows the tendency of the Russian language generally to produce words by suffixation. In prison usage many of these words have disparaging connotations, though the suffixes in question are not those which are usually put to producing pejoratives. The suffix -ishka (-ishko), for example, is rarely encountered. Instead, an-
imal imagery plays a considerable part in producing disdain or contempt. To this category belong the following: *shakal* (cadger), *popka* (sentry in the tower), and *volk* (informer). The last term is ambiguous; in the expression *lagernyi volk* it refers to a hardened prisoner. The following quotations reveal the ambiguity and clarify the usage:

A Shukhovu krepko zapomnilis' slova yego pervogo brigadira Kuzyomina - staryi byl lagernyi volk, sidel k devyat'sot sorok tret'yemu godu uzhe dvenahtsat' let. . . . (1:5-6)

... i kogda Nerzhin stal nakhazhivat' k Spiridonu - Spiridon i yego sosedi po koiwam družno opredelili, chto Nerzhin - volk i ryskayet za dobychei dlya kuma. (1+: 5\+14.)

The abusive vocative forms of the figurative slang are also underlain by animal imagery, but these are not neologisms.

The process of suffixation has produced a number of nouns which distinguish the various ranks and levels of the prison society or name the items of penal paraphernalia. It is convenient to group these nouns by suffix.

1. **Terminations in** -ik, -nik, -chik, -shchik **are quite common and fall into two groups. Those which belong to the camp jargon proper, with an approximate English equivalent, are:** *lagernik* (a camp inmate), *bytovik* (a prisoner convicted for a domestic crime), *dvoinik* (in Solzhenitsyn's usage, a "double agent"), *povtornik* (recidivist), *namordnik* (either a screen over the cell window or used synonymously with the phrase *po rogam* - v. infra), *krestik* (a person convicted on
religious grounds), ukazchik (a prisoner convicted for violating a government decree or ukaz), otkazchik (one who refuses to work), predzonnik (the pre-zone area). The second group contains the words introduced into the camp language. Those which are well-known beyond the prisons include: normirovshchik (norm-setter), desyatnik (job foreman), naryadchik (work assignor), bezdel'nik (loafer, idler), brigadnik (a member of a brigade or work-gang), and nachal'nik (boss, chief, commander, etc.).

2. Terminations in -ka, -ovka, -yashka compose a large class. It is impossible to separate the neologisms in this category from the terms in use in pre-revolutionary prisons and forced-labour institutions. It is reasonable to suggest that vol'nyashka (a depreciatory variant of vol'nyi and the slang vol'nyaga, designating a civilian hired by the prison authorities) is a neologism of the Stalin era. Zanachka (a "fence") is clearly derived from thieves' cant. The origin of the neologism shalashovka (a woman prisoner of easy virtue) has been explained by Shilyayev.\(^2\)\(^4\) The word comes from shalash, a temporary shelter for such women. Popka (parrot) has been mentioned above. Paika and polpaika are references to the bread ration. The minimum guaranteed ration is also known as the garantiika. The prison bunks, made of planks,

\(^2\)\(^4\)Shilyayev, op. cit., p. 240.
were arranged in tiers of four; each was called a **vagonka**, an expression which also designates a group of four prisoners. Other terms are: **prozharka** (roaster - for disinfecting clothes), **zapretka** (forbidden zone), **razdatka** (distribution premises), **komandirovka** (a place of temporary work - an example of semantic change from the military usage), **posadka** (both a prison sentence and the act of imprisoning), **kormushka** (feeding slot in a cell door - a semantic extension of "feeding trough"), **shestyorka** (a prisoner in the service of the administration and attached to the serving class in the mess-hall), and **desyatka** (a ten-year term - probably a neologism of the Stalin era). **Mostyrka** (simulation or faking) is one of many terms signifying fakery: "... Rus'ka... rasskazyval... kak on dokhodil v syroi shakhte, kak stal delat' sebe mostyrku - yezhednevnuju temperaturu, nagrevaya obe podmyshki kamnyami oznakovoi massy..." (3:361) The word **sharashka**, the prisoners' disdainful name for the Mavrino Institute, is an instance of semantic change; the word derives from a Soviet slang expression signifying a deceitful, sinister enterprise. Finally, the word **zechka** (female prisoner) is the counterpart of **zek**.

3. **Terminations in -aga (-yaga)** include a small number of words which, apart from **blatyaga** (criminal also known as **blatar'** and **blatnoi** who lives by **blat** or "connection"), are all firmly associated with the camps and prisons. They are:
vol'nyaga (v. supra), bedolaga (the most unfortunate or unlucky of men), rabotyaga (an ordinary prisoner who is doing general assignment hard labour in the zone), and dokhodyaga (a rabotyaga in the final stages of physical exhaustion who is facing death).

4. Collectives and plurals are rare. Among those which occur in Solzhenitsyn's works are the following: sidki is a general plural for prisoners serving a sentence; it derives from the verb sidet' (to sit); peresidki are those who have "oversat," that is, served more than the allotted sentence; the pridurnya or pridurki are the "trusties" who constitute the serving class. Solzhenitsyn describes them as follows:

No eto byli ne seryye zeki, a tvyordyye lagernyye pridurki, pervyye etikh rabotyagi schitali nizhe der'ma (kak i te stavili rabotyag). No sporit' s nimi bylo bespoezno: u pridurni mezh soboi spaika i s nadziratelyami tozhe. (1:103)

The substantive blatnyye is the political prisoners' designation of the common criminals who call themselves urki.

5. Miscellaneous terminations. The suffix -stvo occurs in the familiar dezhurstvo (duty) and nachal'stvo (administration). A third, gadstvo (approximately equivalent to gadost'), appears to be one of Solzhenitsyn's neologisms. The disdainful suffix -yak occurs in dezhurnyak (dezhurnyi nadziratel'). A few nouns end in -ok: pridurok is the singular of pridurki; potok (wave of prisoners); glazok (peephole in
a cell door); and voronok (diminutive of voron, the Russian equivalent of Black Maria). The termination -ach appears in the forms stukach (informer) and strogach (strict solitary, also designated by the adjective strogii).

Several nouns which are closely associated with the concentration-camp period cannot be classified in this way. Three which have undergone semantic shift are: shmon (body-search), parasha (rumour), and kum (the prisoners' name for the secret police operative). Parasha continues to be used in the meaning "slop-bucket," but a shmon is much more than an obysk. The following extracts illustrate the usage:

Krasnoguben'kii otkryl portsigar, tol'ko chto podarennyi Potapovym, posmotrel mundshtuki vsekh papiros, ne zapryatano li chto v nikh, pokovryalsya mezhdup spichek v korobke, net li pod nimi, proveril rubchiki nosovogo platka, ne zashito li chto - i nichego drugogo v kamanakh ne obnaruzhil. Togda, prosunuv ruki mezhdu nizhei rubashkoi i rasstygnutym pidzhakom, on obkhlopal ves' korpus Nerzhina, nashchupivaya, net li chego zasunutogo pod rubashku ili mezhdhu rubashkoi i manishkoi. Potom on pricel na kortochki i technym obkhvatom dvukh gorstei provyol sverkhu vниз po odnoi noge Nerzhina, potom po drugoi. (3:268)

Chtob napugat' vsekh, nado bylo khot' chast' otnovit'. Po lageryam polzli groznyye parashi o skorykh etapakh na Sever. (3:293)

Byl kum - lagernyi oper starshii leitenant Kamyshan, odinnadtsat' mesyatsev krestivshii yego na vtoroi srok, na novuyu desyatku. (3:245)

The prison jargon has several methods of expressing fakery. The nouns employed are: mostyrka (v. supra), chernukha, and tukhta. Their meanings are shown in the following examples:
A mezhdu tem vsyo eto byla chernukha (putanitsa), Nerzhin temnil po vecheram na sluchoi zakhoda nachal'stva. (3:30)

Potom on sidel, otkryv dlya chernukhi spravochnik i poglyadyvaya, chto delayetsya s yego listom dal'she. (4:608)

Pro sebya Spiridon, yeshchyo kogda govoril o generale Yegorove, uzhe prekrasno dogadalsya, chto vyzvali yego ne iz-za kakoi Germanii, chto fotografiya byla tukhta, kum temnil, a vyzval imeno iz-za tokarnogo stanka. . . . (4:676)

External evidence suggests that tukhta is a regional variation. In Unto Parvilahti's memoirs the meaning given to the word is much wider. There it is a general term for fraudulence. Parvilahti's explanation of tukhta corresponds precisely with what Elinor Lipper calls tufta. She writes:

Tufta is fakery of all kinds. . . . A man who understands the art of tufta can always turn out satisfactory work, although in reality his work should not pass. In the evening, for example, two wood choppers show their pile of wood to the free brigadier. He checks it and notes down: twelve cubic yards. That is a respectable performance. Nevertheless, the two wood choppers are not noticeably tired. In actuality they have felled just enough wood to camouflage artfully a pile of brush. That is tufta.

Lipper served her sentence in Kolyma, Parvilahti his in the Temnikovsky Camp in the autonomous Mordvinian Republic, and


hence closer to the scene of Solzhenitsyn's imprisonment in Kazakhstan. This may account for the variant spelling.

Other nouns in this class are vertukhai (camp Overseer), sfinks (sphinx, a guard), fitil' (a morally and physically exhausted prisoner) and fraier (a tenderfoot - usually a "political" and an object of exploitation by the ordinary criminals).

The neologism zek is of interest. In several places in Solzhenitsyn the word is written in the form ze-ka; this indicates its origin. The official designation of prisoner (zaklyuchyonnyi) was inscribed z/k (read: ze-ka). Solzhenitsyn's novels show that by the time of his imprisonment the neologism had acquired both gender forms (zek, zechka), the plural zeki, (and even an adjectival form zekovskii), which all follow the regular declensional paradigm for their respective classes.

To a special category belong the nouns which derive from the process of contraction. The bucolic-sounding camp names are mostly complete syllabic contractions. These are: Osoblak, Rechlag, Dubrovlag, Ozeralag, Steplag, and Peschanlag. The only exception is Luglag, in which the first syllable is a complete word. Other toponyms are derived from the geographical location of the camps: Sevurallag, Ivdellag, and Kargopollag. There are two kinds of combined contraction. The first follows Luglag, the second reverses the or-
- 39 -
der of word and syllable. Selections: kontslager, lagpunkt, vagonzak, spetsbarak, spetstyr'ma, spetsodezhda, spetstema (of Nadya's university dissertation), spetszadaniye, and on the root oper the substantive operupolnomochennyi. The literal contractions, like the combined contractions, are also subordinated to the grammatical rules. The common ones are: BUR, burovets; VOKhR, vokhrovets; URCh, urchevtsy. In conclusion, it needs to be noted that Solzhenitsyn uses only a small number of syllabic contractions; most of the ones not listed above exist beyond the camps and are well known.

2. Verbs

In this section an attempt is made to classify some of the slang verbs which occur in Solzhenitsyn's usage. The list is supplemented in the next section of the essay. Even so, it remains incomplete; the number of verbs is too great to give a full analysis here. The origin of many of them is obscure; therefore the classification is tentative. Most of the quotations below have been taken from The First Circle. Of the five passages which come from One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, one is unavoidable, and the others preferable.

1. "Blat" verbs. The verbs zanachit' (to filch), stuchat' (to denounce) and temnit' (to bluff) can be classified with conviction. They trace their origin to thieves' cant,
and their meanings have been known for many years, even beyond prison walls.27

Masterka tak prosto brosit' nel'zya. Mozhet, zavtra Shukhov ne vyidet,mozhet, brigadu na Sotsgorodok zaturnut, mozhet, syuda yeshchyo polgoda ne popadyosh' - masterok propadai? Zanachit' tak zanachit'!(1:183-4)

V lagere vot kto pogibayet: kto miski lizhet, kto na sanchast' nadeyetsya da kto k kumu khodit stuchat'.

(1:6)

V Akusticheskoi tem vremenem, khotya vse uzhe znali o priyezde nachal'stvo,reshitel'no ne mogli v sebe preodolet' muchitel'noi inertsii bezdeistviya, poetomu temnili,lenivo kopalis' v yashchikakh s radiolampami, prodlyadyvali skhemy v zhurnalakh,zevali v okno.(3:261)

2. Neologisms. The verbs shesterit' (to work as a camp servant, i.e. a shestyorka), osharashit'sya (to become used to the life of the sharashka), and raskurochit' (to deprive someone of his property) have been newly coined in the camp period.

Kto v zone ostayotsya, yeshchyo tak shesteryat: prochtut na doshchechke, komu posylka, vstrechayut yego tut, na lineike,srazu i nomer soobshchayut. (1:100-1)

Spasibo, starik, no ty tak osharashilsya, chto zabyl lagernyye poryadki. Kto zhe v lagere dast mne brit'sya samomu? (4:785)

... Orobintsev ... v bogatoi shube i shapke, v kotorykh khodil na vole (on ne pobival dazhe na peresylkakh, i yego ne uspeli yeshchyo raskurochit'.

(4:652-3)

3. Verbs showing semantic change are especially numerous. To this group belong: vkalyvat' (to work intensively), zalupat'sya (to tempt fate, to invite trouble), kapnut' (to

27See Vinokur, op. cit., p. 27.
let fall information), zakosit' (to get by ruse), razmenyat' (to put in time), zagnut'sya (to die), zatsepit'sya (to get a good job), zalavlit' (to inform).

Tut kak: ili vsem dopolnitel'noye, ili vsem podykhaite. Ty ne rabotayesh', gad, a ya iz-za tebya golodnym sidet' budu? Net, vkalyvai, padlo! (1:46)

Il'ya Terent'ichl Zabyvayesh' vtoruyu arestantskuyu zapoved': ne zalupaisya. (3:229)

No on sam osteregalsya svoikh sobstvennykh nadziratelei i sobstvennykh zaklyuchyonnykh - inyye iz nikh sostoyali na osvedomitel'noi sluzhbe i mogli na Klement'yeva zhe kapnut'. (3:313)

... vozmozhno dazhe, chto on zakosil лишние хлопчатобумажные брючки. ... (4:774)

No reshitel'nost' zeka tem boleye padayet, chem men'she yemu ostayotsya do osvobozhdeniya. Dyrsin zhe razmenyal poslednii god. (4:645)

... on byl dovolen i etoi svoeui rabotoi v podvale, govorya, chto v lagere davno by uzhe zagnulsya. ... (4:413)

Ili yemu poschastlivit'sya dat' lapu, vstretit' znakomogo - ion zatsepitsya dneval'nym, sanitarom ili dazhe pomoshchnikom kaptorya? (4:775)

Ona derzhala's s zekami prezritel'no, vyskazyvalas', chto ikh nado perestrelyat' ... i sama zavalila dvoikh - odnogo na svyazi s devushkoi, drugogo - na izgotovlenii chemodana iz kazennykh materialov. (3:364-5)

The root morpheme shmon is the semantic vehicle for a group of verbs which present a special problem. In Vladimir Dal's dictionary shmonit' means "to loaf about." Prison jargon shows that the word has now undergone a considerable semantic shift. The nearest synonym is obyskivat', meaning
"to search." A more accurate rendering of the verb shmonit' is "to frisk," since the word derives originally from blat. Solzhenitsyn uses several variants: shmonat' and shmonyat' evidence a change in thematic morpheme; proshmanivat', pros-

shmonit' and doshmanivat' are the result of prefixation and infixation. The following excerpts illustrate their usage:

Uzh golovy kolanny shmonyali, kogda... (1:96)

Okolo odinnadtsati chasov, kogda Nerzhin, vyzvannyi iz Akusticheskoi, prishyol na shmon, - shestero os-
tal'nykh, yekhavshikh na svidaniye, byli uzhe tam. Odnikh doshmanivali, drugiye byli proshmoneny i
ozhidali... (3:267)

Po mere togo, kak etapiruyemykh arestantov sgo-

nyali v shtab tyur'my,- ikh shmonali, a po mere to-
go,kak ikh proshmanivali,- ikh peregonyali v zapas-

nuyu pustuyu komnatu shtaba... (4:791)

As Shilyayev suggests, the apparent lack of coordination in Solzhenitsyn's use of these verbs cannot be explained as an oversight on his part. Shilyayev reasons that Boris Dyakov (in Povesti o perezhitom) employs one form only - shmonat', because this form was current usage in the camps of Eastern Siberia described by Dyakov. He therefore argues the theory of regional variants. In the case of the prefixed forms a different explanation seems plausible. Given the context of the second quotation above, it is clear that proshmonit' is the perfective aspect of a verb designating a completed act (the past passive participle proshmonennyi- short form pro-

28 Shilyayev, op. cit., p. 244.
- 43 -

shmoneny - is its derivative). Furthermore, the search had begun before Nerzhin's arrival; the prefix do- is therefore used here in one of its primary functions, that of pointing out the concluding of an interrupted action. The imperfective aspect doshmanivat' is suitable to this occasion, since Solzhenitsyn is observing the search in the process of completion. In the third quotation the forms shmonat' and proshmanivat' are both being used in a generalizing sense. It is one of the functions of the past tense of the imperfective aspect to communicate this sense. Shmonat' conveys only that a search took place; proshmanivat' points out that the act was being concluded. In neither case is there specific reference to the beginning or end of the search. If this is a satisfactory explanation for the prefixed verbs, it still does not distinguish between the primary variants shmonyat' (used in the first quotation) and shmonat'. In the absence of external evidence, it is impossible to unravel the problem at this stage.

3. Expressions

Solzhenitsyn uses a number of apt expressions which are either his originals or are borrowed from the corpus of standard prison by-words - neologisms of camp jargon. Those which have metaphorical connotations have been discussed in the previous chapter in the section on figurative language.
The aim here is to exemplify the use of certain expressions which have become characteristic of the prison vocabulary.

**ot puza.** In prison jargon the expression means "to your heart's content," "a-plenty": "Doshla kasha - seichas san-instruktoru: yesh' ot puza. I sam - ot puza." (1:56) Again, in *The First Circle*: "Rubaite ot puza, tol'ko ne lopnite!" (3:13) In view of the conditions of hunger which existed in the camps, the use of such an expression in connection with food is not surprising, but it has another use: "Chem v katorzhnom lagere khorosho - svobody zdes' ot puza." (1:116)

**po rogam.** The use of the word "roga" in this phrase is an example of semantic shift. The saying means "deprivation of rights." Under Stalin it was customary for "politicals" to lose their civil rights for the five years following the prison sentence. "Bud' eto chelovek postoronnii,yemu by dal' chetvertnuyu i pyat' po rogam. . . ." (3:68) And again: "... vinovat, ne vinovat - desyat' v zuby, pyat' po rogam - i v lager'." (3:322) Solzhenitsyn often explains the unusual expressions he uses: "... Potapov byl nakazan vsego lish' desyat'yu godami zaklyucheniya i pyat'yu godami lisheniya prav, chto na arestantskom yazyke nazyvalos' desyat' i pyat' po rogam." (3:221)

**kachat' prava.** In general use this expression means in Soviet prisons "to demand one's rights as guaranteed by the constitution." The phrase is a further example of semantic
change. "... tak seichas oni v pokhvalu Nerzhinu vspomnili, kakim lyubitelem kachat' prava on byl. ... ." (4:784) In One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich the saying occurs in combination with the verb shumet' in its colloquial meaning "to kick up a row": "... i khot' shumet' i kachat' prava on, kak chelovek robkii, ne smel. ... ." (1:21)

payat' srok. This phraseologism, meaning "to extend the sentence," shows an artful semantic shift from the original meaning of the verb, "to sweat" (by soldering). "Govorili v tom smysle, chto payat' yemu srok uzhe nekuda - no ne pere-kvalifitsirovali b yemu dvadtsat' pyat' ITL na dvadtsat' pyat' odinochnogo. ... ." (4:771) The perfective aspect is pripayat': "Vtoroi srok pripayayut, - vzkhvnut Dyrsin." (4:645) Another phrase has the same meaning: sovat' novuyu desyatku, "to shove on another ten-year stretch."

otbukhat' desyatku. The literal sense is "to knock off a ten-year term": "Odni ... zhizneradostno dokazyvayut v takikh sluuchakh, chto luchshe sest' v molodyye gody: zdes' uspevayesh' ponyat', chto znachit zhizn', chto v zhizni do-rogo, a chto der'mo, i uzh let s tridtsati pyati, otbukhav desyatku, chelovek stroit zhizn' na razumnykh osnovaniyah." (4:441)

sovat' na lapu. This refers to bribery in the camps. In order to survive, a prisoner had to distribute the contents of a parcel, and bribery had to be practised by the brigade
leaders in order to get the norm-setters to "fix" the work-report. This expression, then, is an extension of the meaning of *nalozhit' svoyu lapu na kogo-nibud'* (to spread one's influence over somebody). It is perhaps best translated by "to grease a palm": "Dlya nikh [kovrov - J.M.] razvyaznost' nuzhna, nakhal'stvo, komu-to lapu sovat'." (1:34) A related phrase is *dat' lapu* in the meaning "to give someone a helping hand."

*tyanut' rezinu*. Related to the verb *temnit'*, this neologism means literally "to stretch the elastic." Hence the figurative sense "to pretend": "Akh, mozhno bylo smolchat'. Mozhno bylo temnit'. Kak zavedeno u zekov, mozhno bylo prin'yat' zadaniye, a potom tyanut' rezinu, ne delat'." (4:696)

*protsentovku zakryt'*. "To conceal the percentage of the labour-norm fulfilled," that is, to falsify the work-report in favour of the prisoners. This practice is also known as *tukhta* (v. supra). "Ty ostavaisya tut, derzhi krepko. Mne seichas protsentovku zakryvat' idti." (1:47)

*dlya ponta*. This is the camp jargon equivalent for the usual Russian *dlya vidimosti*, "for outward show or effect." "Lupa byla yemu absolyutno ne nuzhna, tak kak VIR daval zapis samyye razlyapistyye, no delalos' eto, po lagernomu vyrazheniyu, dlya ponta, i Nerzhin vnutrenne khokhotal...." (3:265)

*dokhodit' na obshchikh*. General-assignment heavy labour
The phraseologism above means "to perish" gradually at such work. "Mежду прочим, одну из девочек я потом на Печоре отблагодарил: она в тридцатом пять ми в Кирилловском потоке попала, докходила на обшечих, я ей в портняжную устроил." (1:68-9)

4. Obscenity

Obscenity presents the modern Russian writer with a serious problem. The demands of the prudish Soviet censorship must be met. In his foreword to One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich Alexander Tvardovsky anticipated the critical reaction the story was bound to evoke when he mentioned that "the author's use - however sparing and to the point - of certain words and expressions typical of the setting in which the hero lived and worked will offend a particularly fastidious taste." Shilyayev has the following to say, to which some credence must be given:

It is important to note that A. Solzhenitsyn wrote his works for the Soviet reader, counting on having them published in the Soviet Union. Knowing the strictness of the censorship and the directions of the communist authorities, it must be thought he was rather moderate in his use of camp vocabulary and slang expressions.

But if the demands of censorship must be met, so must those

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29 See Labedz, op. cit., p. 10.
30 Shilyayev, op. cit., p. 233.
of realism, and that Solzhenitsyn included this language in his novels is a tribute to his status as a writer of truth. From the standpoint of literature, the objections raised by Soviet critics are groundless. Considering the millions who passed through Stalin's camps, no doubt the jargon has long since been absorbed permanently into the Russian language.

The coarse slang of the prisons is distinguished by a wide variety of oaths, obscenities and expletives. All of these are characteristic properties of the speech of bosses and prisoners alike. Shilyayev argues that the supervisory and administrative staff resort to vulgar speech more often than the prisoners.\(^{31}\) It is impossible to see the force of this contention. In view of Solzhenitsyn's reported speech, Shilyayev stands corrected. He is on firm ground, however, when he observes that the opprobrious forms of address used by the prison custodians effectively promoted the "dehumanization" of their charges.\(^{32}\)

In terms of social acceptibility, the vilest speech in the Russian language is known as mat. This is a collective noun which refers to that body of words and expressions grouped around mat' (mother). The word mat itself is a popular-colloquial term. The act of resorting to mother oaths is signified in Solzhenitsyn by the verbs matyugat'sya, ma-

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 245. \(^{32}\)Loc. cit.
terit'sya and maternt'. It is clear that the use of mat is an important element in the speech of the criminal and political prisoner alike, and it has apparently developed into a fine art. Solzhenitsyn says of Nerzhin as he prepares for the transport:

Razve izyskannymi slovami vyrazit' voi ushchemlen-nogo? Imenno seichas, oblachayas' v lagernoye i ye-
duchi v lager', Nerzhin i sam oshchushchal, chto voz-
vrashchayetsya k vazhnomu elementu muzhskoi svobody:

Evidently Solzhenitsyn was surprised to encounter in prison someone who refrained from expressing his annoyance in such terms. This exceptional character is the Junior Lieutenant Nadelashin, of whom Solzhenitsyn writes:

Nadelashin byl chelovekom isklyuchitel'nym ne tol'ko sredi tyuremshchikov . . . no i voobshche sredi svo-

The devices employed by Solzhenitsyn in toning down the obscenity are various. He changes the initial letter of a word or adds a letter or two to the beginning of an oath. Elsewhere he introduces ellipsis at the beginning, the end or within a word, or omits a complete word. Such techniques effectively obscure meanings, and the uninitiated reader is unfavourably impressed by a number of seeming misprints.
CHAPTER III

THE ETHICAL PROBLEM

Dostoyevsky wrote his brother in 1856: "Believe me, that having been in as much turmoil as I, in the end you'll extract from life a little philosophy, a word which you can interpret as you like."¹ This "turmoil" had been a profound religious crisis occasioned by four years at katorga (penal servitude) which he completed in 1854. In 1953 Solzhenitsyn was released into exile following an eight-year sentence in Stalin's camps. For Solzhenitsyn too imprisonment had been a spiritual crucible. His philosophy, extracted "from human biographies,"¹⁵⁰ is revealed in the search for moral and spiritual fulfilment which provides the key to the idiosyncrasy of the protagonist of The First Circle (Gleb Nerzhin) and motivates the entire novel in the spirit of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy.

The suffering in prison has a positive consequence: it is an occasion for moral development and spiritual self-realization. A man denied is a free man, and herein resides

the reigning paradox of the novel: in Stalinist Russia only a prisoner was free to deal honestly with his fellows; only a prisoner could withstand the encroachments of the hateful regime. Courage born of tribulation finds its most sublime expression in an exchange between Bobynin and Abakumov, the Minister of State Security, who attempts to intimidate him. But as a seasoned veteran of the GULAG orbit Bobynin enjoys immunity to Abakumov's threats. He declares:

As a rule, understand and pass on to anyone above who needs to know that you're strong only as long as you don't deprive people of everything. For a man you've taken everything from is no longer in your power. He's free all over again. (3:119)

Hence, by a curious irony, the martyrs of the system become its conquerors.

There is an awareness of eternity in Solzhenitsyn's works which imbues them with his sense of mission and their fundamental themes with a universal validity. His treatment of conscience, good and evil, life and death, and man's relation to society reflects the moral passion with which the nineteenth-century critical realists (Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky in particular) approached the spiritual dilemmas of the human condition, which places him firmly in the main stream

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of Russian literary tradition. The Nobel Prize citation for Solzhenitsyn is therefore singularly apt.\(^4\)

If the fullest meaning of spirituality is expounded as the most sublime moral and intellectual qualities of man apropos his relation to God and nature, to himself and his fellow men,\(^5\) then it does not seem extravagant to describe Solzhenitsyn's work as "the Renaissance of Russian spiritual life."\(^6\) Indeed, judging by contents and themes, his writings may be confidently characterized as a spiritual oasis in the moral and intellectual desert that socialist realism is today.\(^7\) His writing is genuine realism precisely because it represents reality in its entirety: the world it creates embraces both the material and spiritual phenomena of life. As the narrator, Solzhenitsyn does not specifically comment upon spiritual experiences; rather, his spirituality is reflected in the thoughts and conversations of his characters.

\(^4\)"For the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature." See Labedz, *op. cit.*, p. 175.


\(^7\)Solzhenitsyn himself describes contemporary Soviet literature as "cosmetics." See Labedz, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
and in those themes which occupy the centre of his artistic vision of human life.

The critic Arkady Belinkov adheres to the view that "Solzhenitsyn stands at the moral center of the movement to cleanse Russia of the spirit of Stalinism." This formulation shares the popularity of impressionistic judgments; it gains in precision if the spirit of Stalinism is understood as the spirit of political despotism and social oppression. It is readily acknowledged that Solzhenitsyn has become the symbolic conscience of modern Russia, but the contention of his critics that his work manifests allegiance to some sort of political opposition in his own country is untenable. He formulates his own artistic mission in the following terms:

A writer's tasks concern the more universal and eternal themes. They treat the mysteries of the human heart and conscience, the confrontation of life and death, the overcoming of the anguish of the soul, and those laws of continuing humanity that were born in the depths of time immemorial and that will cease to be only when the sun is extinguished.

Hence, Solzhenitsyn's mission is to arouse the conscience and consciousness of all mankind, to instil into it an unwavering love of truth and passion for justice, and to evoke a compassionate understanding of man as an individual and social being. Soviet man is a microcosm of a universal

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8"The Writer as Russia's Conscience," op. cit., p. 32.
human condition. For Solzhenitsyn modern life is the captive of technology, the influence of religion is waning, and man is engrossed in the pursuit of material prosperity. The writer must fill up "the empty spaces."^{10}

The philosophical foundation of Solzhenitsyn's work is pravda, the concept which suggests to the Russian mind a harmonious compound of truth and justice. This ambiguity is strikingly caught by the old expression zhit' po pravde (to live by truth), meaning to live in accordance with justice. The concept of pravda is imperfectly apprehended when taken as an embracement of two independent though coexisting constituents. The essential point is made by Mikhailovsky. He says the following, which may be taken as representative of Russian views:

Every time the word "pravda" comes into my mind, I cannot help admiring its astonishing inner beauty . . . only in Russian, it seems, are "truth" and "justice" designated by the same word, fusing as it were into one great whole. "Pravda" - in this vast meaning of the word - has always been the goal of my searchings. . . .^{11}

To Solzhenitsyn's mind pravda is the absolute; it is a rule for living which tolerates no compromise.

There is no need to rehearse the rampant injustices

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of the Stalin era or, indeed, of Russian history generally; it is replete with instances of vigorous suppression of the truth. As Nerzhin says, there was always something to stop those "who might scream the truth or seek justice." (3:270)

It is readily understandable that Stalinist injustice would drive some Soviet citizens into a life of illegality. Such is Ruska Doronin, who has been alienated by the social system. "Circumstances make devils of us," he says. "I myself am all for an honest life, but for everyone . . . for every single person!" (3:324) His "mischievous innocence" induces the reader to concur with Jeri Laber that he would be prone to flout the law in any society; in Stalinist society, "his destruction is preordained."12 But the question has a more important side: Doronin finds justification for his actions in the lawlessness which prevails around him. The universal social injustice intensifies his perverseness. For him the honest life does not demand obedience to state law; it is a life of justice and equality. He pronounces against social injustice in the following terms:

What did the revolution rise against? Against privileges! What was it that disgusted the Russian people? Privileges. Some were dressed in overalls, and others in sables, some went about on foot - others in phaetons, some waited for the factory hooter and others fed their faces in restaurants. (3:324-5)

The Russian has had contempt for the law throughout history. The radical intellectual Alexander Herzen, who was himself a seeker of freedom and social justice, comments on the cause of this attitude:

The lack of legal order, which has from the earliest times hung like a cloud over the people, has at the same time been something in the nature of a schooling. The crying injustice of one half of its laws has taught the Russian people to hate the other as well: the Russian submits to the law from force alone. Complete inequality before the courts has killed in him all respect for legality. A Russian, whatever his calling, evades or violates the law whenever he can do so with impunity, and the government does exactly the same.\(^{13}\)

It is significant that Solzhenitsyn, with the intellectuals of the previous century, subscribes to a "vision of anarchy engendered by despair."\(^{14}\) For it shows that the revolution has failed to meet its primary obligation: Russian humanity is not yet free of the shackles of oppression. Solzhenitsyn was trained in this mistrust of the legal order in a school of agony without equal. "The law can be stood on its head," he observes. "When one ten-year stretch ends, they'll say: here's another one for you. Or exile you." (1:52) There is no doubt that all feeling for legality and hope for justice was irrevocably suppressed by the minions of Stalin's penal


\(^{14}\)Loc. cit.
apparatus, which was deliberately calculated to that end.15

Solzhenitsyn's lack of confidence in legal institutions and insistence on the moral principle as the guide to the honest life reveals his affinity with the "conservative anarchism" of the Slavophiles. As it appeared by the middle of the nineteenth century, the developed creed of the Slavophiles embraced two fundamental tenets: the first insisted on the pre-eminence of the moral and religious law over the written state law; the second averred that the unreflecting reason excelled the lower dissecting reason. The Slavophile system combined intuition and instinct, which were found in Old Russia, ancestral tradition and the Orthodox Church, not in the Roman Church or Western European institutions.16

Konstantin Aksakov, one of the more romantic of the second-generation Slavophiles, made a comparative study of the origins of the Russian and Western European states. The foundation of the latter, he wrote, was "force, slavery and hostility," of the former "free will, liberty and peace."17 He went on to expound the theory that Russia had an intell-


ectual and religious mission to fulfil in Europe. A similar belief in the power of Eastern European literature to point the way out of the world's materialistic impasse is held by Solzhenitsyn. Western European literature would not be able to carry out this task, he contends, for Western Europe has not experienced any cataclysms in recent years.\(^{18}\)

The historian Bernard Pares has observed that every Russian has in him latently two sets of instincts: those of the Slavophile and those of the Westernizer.\(^{19}\) Solzhenitsyn seems to confirm this conviction. There is a passage in the novel where he advocates a compromise between the two views of Russian affairs. Two prisoners are discussing Peter the Great:

One of them scolded him . . . for having distorted and removed Russian folk dress, thereby depriving his people of their individuality. . . . He argued that even now it was not too late to revive certain parts of that dress which could be conveniently and comfortably combined with modern clothing, and that Paris should not be copied blindly. (3:208)

The lay theologian and philosopher Alexei Khomyakov held to his belief that Russia was in the process of becoming "Holy Russia." The Moscow Slavophiles of the time insisted on the observance of ritual and custom, and the fanatical desire to


be truly Russian induced Khomyakov to wear folk dress. 20

The Slavophile teaching subordinates rational logic to spontaneity. Therefore, in the Slavophile's opinion, the logical process of reasoned thinking to which the Westerner was given rendered him incapable of judging accurately, and this deprived him of the essential experience of life which involuntary responses provided. This submitting to the demands of the heart and conscience distinguishes the heroine of Solzhenitsyn's charming story Matryonin dvor (Matryona's Home). The old lady is a model of supreme excellence:

... she is that very righteous one, without whom, according to the proverb, the village cannot stand. Nor any town. Nor our whole land. (1:231)

The First Circle contains incontrovertible evidence that Solzhenitsyn considers Westerners to be easily seduced by rational logic. The Butyrskaya Prison is the scene of a "Potemkin village" situation. Here a cell has been given an entirely fraudulent appearance to work a deceit upon a certain Mrs. R- (Mrs. Roosevelt) who has come on an inspection tour as a representative of UNRRA. She leaves the "magnificent prison," fully "convinced of the falsity of the insinuations being spread by hostile people in the West," (4:471) and satisfied that conditions in Soviet prisons are conducive to the reforming of its delinquent citizens.

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20 Cherniavsky, op. cit., p. 167.
Since appearances can be misleading, rational logic is not trustworthy. Instead, Solzhenitsyn believes that one must obey his inner feelings. A human being's readiness to suffer for his conscientious convictions is the supreme test of nobility. The exactitude of the code of honour set down in the novel is manifest in the case of Gerasimovich. When the authorities offer him freedom in exchange for engineering special cameras to be used for surveillance by night (a task alleged to be in his field), he declines instinctively and emphatically. "No! That's not in my field!" he insists. "I don't specialize in imprisoning people! I'm not a fisher of men! It's enough that we were imprisoned." (4:696) In a similar circumstance Nerzhin gives up "the food of the gods for lentil soup" (3:64) when he refuses to cooperate in the cryptography work. In Solzhenitsyn's view these men make the correct choice instinctively, out of repugnance against the moral consequences which would flow from cooperating in the schemes of the authorities.

The extremely important place occupied by pravda in Solzhenitsyn's conception of the world is made known in the extant part of a letter written to three students. What he says there is representative of his ideological militancy:

There is nothing relative about justice, as there is nothing relative about conscience. Indeed, justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience usually recognize also the voice of justice... They can
shout, they can take you by the throat, they can tear your breast, but convictions based on conscience are as infallible as the internal rhythm of the heart (and one knows that in private life it is the voice of conscience which we often try to suppress).  

The diplomat Volodin embodies this struggle with conscience in private life. His decision to call Dobroumov is preceded by an agonizing mental confrontation between conscience and expediency that suggests the turpitude of the times. In the atmosphere of suspicion and fear created by Stalin's terror the operating behavioural word was "caution." Solzhenitsyn asks a momentous question: "If we are always cautious, can we remain human beings?" (3:8) This irresolution emphasizes the unfortunate tendency of all people to suppress the conscience. And if the diplomat's ultimate decision is a victory for morality, it is also the exception that proves the rule.

Solzhenitsyn's faith in the infallibility of judgments of conscience and his denial of any relativity toward them is an essentially anachronistic point of view. On that account it would attract few adherents among modern philosophers. Intuitively, conscience is commonly understood as a kind of interior judge which possesses the mystical ability to arbitrate in the ethical disputes imposed on the mind of man and to indicate (perhaps by divine inspiration) morally

acceptable courses of action. This conception embraces two distinct senses: a retrospective one which can be traced to a pre-Socratic antecedent (which is invoked in the examination of the Soviet Union's Stalinist past), and a prospective one which was first mentioned in a Pauline epistle (and to which Volodin makes his appeal). Conscience as a philosophic concept thus has a long history. The most important analysis of conscience seems to have been made by St Thomas Aquinas who explained it in the medieval fashion. He argued that the reason was endowed with both theoretical and moral principles. As the faculty of apprehending fundamental moral principles, reason was called synteresis. The synteresis furnishes the major premise of a syllogism: all evil should be avoided; an inferior reason provides the minor premise: assisting the secret police is evil; conscience (syneidesis) draws the conclusion: assisting the secret police should be avoided. The doctrine that the conscience is susceptible to error has been given philosophical recognition since the time of St Paul. Modern theologians acknowledge that there is scope for self-deception, and this applies both to man's

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22 For this distinction I am indebted to Dr Ilmar Tammello in "Conscience, alienation and violence," from The Sydney Morning Herald, 12 June 1971, p. 6.

understanding of what constitutes the good and the goodness of a particular intended act, while modern secular thinkers interpret conscience as a reflection of the societal forces with which man must contend. But this says that conscience is a relative phenomenon: it is as good (or bad) and strong (or weak) as the influences which a man's social environment exerts upon him. Thus individual conscience may be silenced or deformed in proportion to the number of corrupting ideas which prevail in society. If credence is given to the modern point of view, then convictions founded on the judgments of an interior arbitrator, however divinely inspired, are rendered suspect. Because of the possibility of conscientious error, spontaneous responses might prove less reliable than conscientious judgements based on an objective appraisal of all the facts in any social or political situation.

The foregoing commentary has an appropriate connection with the tragedy of Rubin, whose delusion is a symptom of conscientious error. Rubin is a brilliant philologist, a man of latent unimpeachable moral rectitude, but the victim of his revolutionary zeal. His self-deception proceeds from his allegiance to an ideology alien to the Russian national character (Russian communism is a Western import). In Rubin the author shows that subtle process of self-indoctrination by which a man believes that "socialist truth at times progresses in a roundabout distorted way." (3:20) On this pre-
mise he explains away the Stalinist aberration and fails to make an objective analysis of the fact that the country was "pressing on and on in the wrong direction." (4:707) Blinded by his faith in the cause - "Despite everything . . . we'll triumph" (4:707) - he is convinced that he is bound by duty to place his scientific knowledge at the disposition of the authorities and to help trap Volodin. The tragedy consists in this subordinating of personal feelings to the interests of the state. Solzhenitsyn appreciates Rubin's motives, and the scolding of his deuteragonist as "the representative of progressive ideology in the sharashka" (4:532) is intended less as a rebuke of the man himself than as an indirect repudiation of a doctrine that causes a man to sustain such a moral paradox. As Horst Bienek says, Solzhenitsyn destroys the "communist dream" and damages "the delicate equilibrium of reality and dream which is being preserved diligently by the Party even after Stalin and Khrushchev." And in doing so Solzhenitsyn implies that the responsibility for Rubin's condition lies with the Party. In Slavophilistic manner, he intimates that communism has superimposed on Russia a false idealism which has corrupted its adherents and rendered the Rubins incapable of seeing that their actions do not accord

From a purely Russian standpoint, Rubin's error may be explained in terms of pravda. For Rubin the truth is the ultimate triumph of communism, yet Soviet reality indicates that the Marxist revolution has been betrayed. A Western anthropologist made the following observation about pravda, which serves to explain why Rubin's fellow prisoners do not share his convictions:

All men of good will must recognize the Truth when it is pointed out to them. . . . To accept the decision of the majority, without the appropriate internal convictions, is for Great Russians the abandonment of all honour and self-respect; to submit willingly to those you are convinced do not possess the Truth is an act of baseness.

Rubin considers material progress in the system evidence of a superior principle underlying the Soviet state; therefore he defends Stalin's penal system, sanctions the barbarities of the existing order as a necessary adjunct to the achieving of its goal, and defers to the Party as his conscience.

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26 Edward Crankshaw writes: "Today when we compare the reality of Soviet Russia with Lenin's dream it is all too easy to see what has gone wrong. What is not so easy to see, because the route traced by the march of progress is obscured in its own dust, is that the dream had been abandoned long before Stalin took over from Lenin." See Russia by Daylight, London: Michael Joseph, 1951, p. 80.

What Rubin fails to understand clearly is that the achievements of the Soviet Union in the Stalin era are not attributable to the superiority which he considers to be inherent in communism or to the implicit validity of dialectical and historical materialism; rather, they are sound testimony to the effectiveness of organized compulsion and coercion. The remarks of Nerzhin to the semi-literate peasant Yegorov are a comment on Rubin's delusion and, by extension, on the ill-examined motives of all Soviet communists:

Perhaps all people desire the good, or think they do, but not everyone is guiltless or free from mistakes - some are even quite conscienceless, and they cause each other so much harm. They convince themselves they are doing good, but in fact it turns out to be evil. Or, as your proverb has it, they sow rye and it comes up weeds. (4:560)

This also suggests that Solzhenitsyn invites the leadership and, perhaps, the entire Soviet population, to examine its conscience.

By 1949 Stalin had long since become the undisputed master of the Kremlin. Practically, he was the Party, hence the conscience of men like Rubin. Perhaps Stalin could not afford a delicate conscience; the real reason for his early bid for absolute control of the Party was to save a country driven to the verge of economic collapse. That aim would be universally approved. Criticism of Stalin's actions in-

variably centres on his methods. As is often suggested, the terror may have been the unavoidable concomitant of revolution, but terror on the Stalinist scale cannot be approved by any normal moral standard. For Stalin was concerned less with revolution than with protecting his exclusive control of the Party. It is not a coincidence that when the Yezhovshchina had expired Stalin was the sole survivor of Lenin's original politburo. Accordingly, any investigation into the morality of the revolution must give due weight to Stalin's personal motives. The responsibility for the "violations of socialist legality" (as Stalin's crimes are euphemistically called in official Soviet jargon), however, cannot be borne by him alone; as the novel shows, the guilt is collective.

Solzhenitsyn's concern with the moral imperative is almost an obsession. There is a scene in Cancer Ward where Shulubin formulates a theory of ethical socialism which, in the absence of external evidence, throws tentative light on Solzhenitsyn's conception of society and forms a complement to the ethical theme of The First Circle:

We have to show the world a society where all relationships, fundamental principles and laws have their source in ethics - and only in it! All considerations must be determined only by the demands of ethics: how to raise children, what to train them for, to what end the work of adults is to be directed, and how their leisure time is to be occupied. In scientific research only that would be permitted which is not detrimental to morality - and, in the first instance, to the researchers themselves. The same goes for foreign policy! On
the question of frontiers, we should not be motivated by how much a certain move will enrich or strengthen us or enhance our prestige, but by one thing only: to what extent is it ethical? (2:489-90)

This system is not founded on happiness, but on "mutual affection" (взаимное расположение) which, in Solzhenitsyn's opinion, is the worthiest of human aspirations.

In the manner of Tolstoy in the nineteenth century, and Pasternak in the twentieth, Solzhenitsyn gives thematic expression to his implicit values in what Henry Gifford has called "the self-deceit and mutual tortures of men."29 His appraisal of the motives, character and meaning of the revolution in all its profundity and contradictoriness follows the literary precedent established by such writers as Babel, Pilnyak and Pasternak. He endorses Pasternak in his defense of man against the intrusions of systematic thought, and he presents his ethical socialism as a conscientious objection to the expedient political philosophies which have obtained currency in the twentieth century.

In the present-day world, where both international and domestic relations are being influenced increasingly by political ideas, and especially in a country where politics has been viewed officially for over fifty years as the sole panacea of the human condition, Solzhenitsyn's scheme for a

society founded on ethics will be taken as the quintessence of idealism or eccentricity. Whether or not this proposal contains the seeds of political ideology, it is an incisive criticism of that "diseased" society symbolized by the cancer ward. And that this society stands in need of regeneration is attributable at least in part to the indiscriminate use (or abuse) of the end-means principle.

The familiar and complex question of ends and means is the central ideological issue of The First Circle. Rubin contends: "In the entire history of mankind our aim is the first that is so high we can say it justifies the means employed to achieve it."(4:564) Rubin neatly divorces private from social morality, insisting that they are qualitatively different, and affirms the morality of revolutionary means. His opponent, Sologdin, maintains that "the higher the aim, the higher must be the means! Perfidious means destroy the aim itself!" (4:564) Rejecting Rubin's Machiavellian double standard as "filth" (gadstvo), he declares:

Morality shouldn't lose its force as it widens its scope! Otherwise, if you personally kill or betray

30 Manya Harari noted Solzhenitsyn's deep abiding humanism, but invited the Soviet dissidents collectively to give more thought to the limited application of politics to society in order to avoid "perpetuating the existing confusion" which results from allowing politics (or ethics as a substitute) to become a religion. See "Solzhenitsyn's Cancer Ward - Part II," Survey, No. 69 (October 1968), p. 148. Deming Brown has called Solzhenitsyn's ethical socialism an ingenuous political notion. See Brown, op. cit., p. 306.
someone, that's villainy. But if the One-and-Only and Infallible bumps off a mere five or ten million, then that accords with natural law and ought to be understood in a progressive sense, I suppose? (4:565)

For Rubin morality is relative: what is permitted the state is not permitted the individual in private life; for Sologdin morality is absolute: there exists some universal moral principle, in the light of which all external acts must be examined. The authority of the Greco-Roman-Christian tradition, with its insistence on the primacy of the individual conscience, stands behind the contention that good ends are not wrought by evil means.

Yet history records contrary cases. Adequate moral grounds cannot be adduced for the Norman Conquest, which is not therefore condemned by historians, because it benefited England to the utmost. But the Hegelian dialectic, which holds the historical process to be rationally predetermined, does not admit of historical accident. Although Marx denied predeterminism, he agreed that events were more than chance occurrences. He developed a theory of determinism. These deterministic views do not admit of a morality declared universally valid. Kant's categorical imperatives subordinate the group to the individual; Hegel therefore rejected them,


because he considered the process of history to be founded on a higher ethics. Hegel insisted that social ties precede ethical commands; therefore the purpose of the latter is to enforce the former. Marx saw the dialectic of history at work in the class struggle; for him, then, the group is the class, and it produces its own ethics. Thus both Hegel and Marx repudiated abstract ethical idealism.

If Solzhenitsyn is implying that life in the Soviet Union has been brutalized because theoretical communism has been interpreted distortedly, and that this has drained the doctrine of its true message to humanity, then the ethical foundation of communism invites investigation. For it is generally advanced by Soviet communists that their barbaric style accords with the interests of Marxism-Leninism. This movement has induced Rubin to assist in causing destruction and death during the collectivization of the peasantry; yet he still stands firm on the morality of revolutionary means. Thus, the Marxist ethic must be challenged.

Solzhenitsyn's opinion of Lenin is not consistently set forth in his novels: he extols some of Lenin's virtues, but does not criticize all his faults. Yet it was Lenin who interpreted the Marxian ethic in one of its standard formulations. In his Address to the 3rd Congress of the Russian Young Communist League (2 October 1920) Lenin disavowed the

\(^33\)Ibid., p. 48. \(^34\)Fitzlyon, op. cit., p. 99.
ethics of the bourgeoisie and defined communist morality as that which serves to destroy capitalist society and create proletarian society.³⁵

The Marxist's conception of morality will not withstand several primary objections. Firstly, if the ethics of a society reflect only the interests of the dominant class, then proletarian society will reflect the interests of the working class, but no standards exist to establish the superiority of proletarian over bourgeois morals. Secondly, to prefer the former because the dialectic ensures the triumph of the workers does not accord with any ethical system; the unavoidability of a thing need not imply its desirability. Thirdly, it is difficult to accept the Marxian antipathy to abstract ethical idealism; this is a denial of that innate sense of right and wrong which seems to have influenced the moral judgments of men throughout history. Finally, in the name of the class struggle the worker is exhorted to employ violence; the Communist Manifesto is therefore little more than a prescription for murder, and killing contravenes all codes of ethical behaviour. Despite Lenin's protestation to the contrary, his formulation of communist ethics is a repudiation of all ethical systems; indeed, "communist ethics" is virtually a contradiction in terms. It might be argued,

then, that the fervour with which the Marxists pursue their communist ideal merely emphasizes the inherent amoralism of the Russian revolutionary movement.\textsuperscript{36}

The ideologues of compulsion, who find a convenient endorsement of their ideas in the authority of Machiavelli, argue persistently that political life follows its own laws and logic, independent of ethics. But Machiavelli proposed an absolute despotism to realize his ideal of a strong, independent state; it was to this end that his prince was invested with the power to invoke the end-means principle. In view of the anarchical and corrupt condition of Renaissance Italy, his pessimism is, if not pardonable, at least understandable. But the modern apologist who expounds his theory of political expediency in the absence of these conditions is undoubtedly inspired with an excess of pragmatism.

There is an equally popular view that the holder of public office is obliged to invoke the end-means principle because absolute moral standards to guide him cannot be defined. The objections to this contention are obvious. At no time in history has the guiding principle of any government been tender consideration for its subjects, but the government which gains power and subsequently runs itself on the understanding that anything is justified if it contributes

\textsuperscript{36}The problem of the Marxian ethic has been neatly unravelled by Carew Hunt, to whom the foregoing paragraph is deeply indebted. See Hunt, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 109-22.
to the establishing of a communist society must inevitably invite criticism. Since no true communist society exists in the world, it is impossible to know whether it would benefit humanity. And the Marxist's claim to omniscience certainly does not help to decide the issue. The history of political philosophy will perhaps always oscillate between the poles of the ethical and the ruthlessly realistic, but to imbibe Machiavellian pessimism and apply it outright is to concede the arena to the opportunists of history, like the fanatics of Marxism-Leninism, that

party of Russians who had got hold of a German philosophy of history which provided the more intelligent of them with an intellectual armoury and the less intelligent with an excuse to conduct themselves like pedantic thugs and call the result historical necessity.  

Sologdin is a disciple of Dostoyevsky, and the point for which he contends in his altercation with Rubin is the lesson of Crime and Punishment. There Dostoyevsky declared human life to be inviolable by unmasking, in the wording of Mochulsky, the "blatant lie" of the "humane utilitarianism" which seduces Raskolnikov, and by showing that "the 'economic principle' does not lead to universal prosperity, but rather to mutual annihilation."  

It is difficult to support by logical argumentation

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37 Crankshaw, op. cit., p. 19.
38 Mochulsky, op. cit., p. 275.
the contention that the Bolsheviks consciously desired evil, but Solzhenitsyn shows that no effort was made to avoid the endemic wastage of human life that distinguished the Stalin era. Edward Crankshaw argues a cogent case against Lenin as the fountainhead of Bolshevik evil, but recognizes that the source of the evil lay in Lenin's being a Russian. "To be a conspiratorial Russian," he says,"and a natural materialist into the bargain offers unparalleled opportunities for chicanery of every kind."\(^{39}\) Crankshaw set about demonstrating that Stalin's achievement was merely to take Lenin's policies to their logical conclusion. Milovan Djilas holds that communists have ethical principles, but they have been corrupted by their methods.\(^{40}\) Solzhenitsyn's task has been to show that these methods disrupted society by disturbing the delicate equilibrium of good and evil, which distorted the moral foundations of human relations. The Bolsheviks taught that "'pity' was a shameful feeling, 'goodness' was ludicrous, and 'conscience' was a priest's expression." (3:363)

The First Circle seeks, not to solve the problem of evil, but to expose the workings of evil in real life. The veneer of uncertainty which centuries of metaphysical speculation have placed over the problem is thoroughly penetrat-

\(^{39}\)Crankshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

ted, and all that remains is the source of evil: human malice and weakness. The essence of evil is identified by the simple peasant, Spiridon Yegorov: "The wolfhound is right, and the cannibal is wrong!" (4:561) There is no evil in the rustling of the cockroaches in Matryona's dilapidated home; nor is there evil in the actions of the dog. In this there is a reassertion of the medieval theological position that a thing causes evil when it contravenes the laws of its own nature. Thus, evil comes with the knock on the door at four o'clock in the morning. The evil consciously created is the greatest of all evils.

Evil is ineradicable, but its force can be weakened by strict observance of the unwritten moral laws and obedience to the dictates of heart and conscience. The solution to the modern dilemma lies in Nerzhin's resolution: "A man must strive to temper, to shape his soul in order to become a human being." (3:544) Solzhenitsyn endured war, prison, concentration camp and cancer, yet remained a human being. In this there is an example for all mankind.

One can build the Empire State Building, discipline the Prussian Army, elevate the hierarchy of the state above the throne of the Almighty, yet fail to overcome that unaccountable spiritual superiority of certain human beings. (3:76)
CONCLUSION

Apart from its artistic value to the world literary community, The First Circle is a significant novel in other respects. At a time when literature as a propaganda medium has become routine in the Soviet Union, the novel commands special attention as a product of samizdat in revealing how great literature is being suppressed in the interest of the Communist Party. The novel plays a double role: internally, the portrayal of the novelist Galakhov exposes the struggle between sycophancy and individual conscience and bears witness to the unhappy fate of the many potentially great writers whom Stalin shaped into "engineers of the human soul"; externally, the novel presents an implicit challenge to the censorship by insisting on the recording of truth.

Under a despotic Stalin the truth could not be told completely, and a writer like Galakhov who composed in the prevailing conditions merely compromised his conscience and dignity. Inwardly Galakhov longs to set down the truth, but as he writes, and anticipates the reactions of his critics, the words fall obediently into place to create yet one more monument to the personal glory of Stalin. Through Galakhov, Solzhenitsyn censures this prostitution of literary talent,
which strengthens the already intolerable censorship.

Although the struggle against sycophancy appears to have passed with the decline of one-man dictatorship in the post-Stalin era, the prescriptions of socialist realism remain. The method of "revolutionary romanticism" introduced by Stalin continues to create a literature for writers, not for readers. Hence the importance of the works of samizdat, which keeps alive the Great Russian literary tradition, and the importance of The First Circle, a work written fully in that tradition.

While the novel itself is an implicit plea for creative freedom, its author has been explicit in his demands. His letter to the Fourth Congress of Soviet Writers was arguably the most courageous act witnessed in the Soviet Union in recent years. That letter demanded the abolition of censorship, which is illegal because the constitution does not provide for it, and insisted that good works were being distorted and suppressed when they could, if published, exert a desirable influence on the development of the social conscience and the human spirit. The concluding remarks are of particular interest:

Of course, I am calmly confident that I will fulfil my writer's duty in all circumstances, and from the grave even more successfully and indisputably than while alive. No one can barricade the ways of truth, and for its advancement I am prepared to accept even death. But perhaps many lessons will teach us, finally, not to stop the writer's pen
while he lives. Never has this ennobled our history.\textsuperscript{1}

Solzhenitsyn's novels are eloquent testimony to his own courage and independent spirit, and whatever reprisals the authorities make against him, this personal courage is already a matter of historical record. The protest begun by the twenty-seven-year-old captain of artillery, whose rash audacity cost him eight years of life in the "iron pipe" of Stalin's hell, resounds in the works of the fifty-two-year-old militant realist who now finds himself "at the passionate focal point of the major issue that inflames dissent and frightens the men in the Kremlin today."\textsuperscript{2} In view of latter-day neo-Stalinism, the significance of Solzhenitsyn's work has increased, and the regime is fully aware of the serious threat it represents. One of the conformist writers, Alexei Surkov, has the following to say, which may be taken as representative of official views:

\textldots Solzhenitsyn's works are more dangerous for us than those of Pasternak: Pasternak was a man detached from life, but Solzhenitsyn, with his vigorous, militant, ideological temperament, is a man of principle.\textsuperscript{3} Surkov's statement is also an unintended compliment to Solzhenitsyn's spiritual strength. The combination of literary

\textsuperscript{1}See \textit{Works}, Vol. 6, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{2}"The Writer as Russia's Conscience," \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{3}In \textit{Works}, Vol. 6, p. 47.
talent and active social conscience makes him a troublesome adversary.

The fate of the greatest living prose writer of the Soviet Union (as Solzhenitsyn is called in liberal literary circles) today hangs in the balance. He continues to write, indicating that he has the courage of his convictions, but how long he will be allowed to defy the existing order is a matter of conjecture. The latest move made in the campaign to discredit him occurred in November 1969, when he was expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers. His answer to the expulsion was a fiery open letter to the Secretariat of the Union, from which it is appropriate to repeat the following lines:

Wipe the dust from your watches. They are centuries behind the times. . . .

It's time to remember that we belong, first of all, to humanity. And humanity has distinguished itself from the animal world by thought and speech. And these by nature must be free. If they are fettered, we become animals again.

Publicity, honest and complete publicity, is the primary condition for the health of every society, ours too. And whoever does not desire publicity for our country is indifferent to his motherland and thinks only of his own selfish interests. . . . does not desire to cleanse it of disease, but to drive it inside to putrefy.\(^4\)

Three points must be stressed here: firstly, Solzhenitsyn's concern for the "motherland" shows him to be a loyal Soviet citizen and Russian patriot; secondly, his accusation that

the authorities do not desire a cure for the social ills of the Soviet Union suggests that he favours the Soviet system of government, but not the authoritarian type of rule which has endured since the revolution; thirdly, and most importantly, his plea on behalf of humanity as a whole reflects a desire, which has been growing among Soviet intellectuals, to see the nations of the world "converge" in the common interests of all mankind.\(^5\)

In the meantime, Solzhenitsyn's works have not been received in the spirit in which they were written. They are meant to urge Russians to face the past honestly, to confess that crimes, not "errors," were committed in the Stalin era and to set about making the necessary corrections. His expulsion from the Writers' Union shows how much he is feared and testifies to the government's despairing defence of the rigid censorship and its suppression of freedom of speech. Volodin's remark in *The First Circle* is fully applicable to Solzhenitsyn himself: "A great writer . . . is, as it were, a second government. Therefore no regime has ever loved its great writers, only its minor ones." (\(\text{p. 503}\))

When Solzhenitsyn's profound sense of tragedy, and insistence on human dignity, nobility and kindness in human

relations, all of which pervade The First Circle almost to the point of surfeit, are considered in the light of modern materialistic philosophies, then it becomes clear that for him the honest life is the apotheosis of the good. It is a life of fidelity to the moral imperative, that indefinable and immutable law of humanity, a constituent of the ethical continuum which reaches back to the embryonic moral philosophy of the ancient Greeks. Like Dostoyevsky before him, he has become the spokesman of the Russian people's sufferings and aspirations, and he has taken it upon himself to try to combat the corruptive tendencies of the modern age.

In view of the suffering and torment he has endured, his world could have become one of despair and degradation; instead, it is one of human grandeur, and this constitutes the essence of his eternal optimism. Despite the slanderous denunciation by his hidebound detractors, those captives of a cynical ideology, Solzhenitsyn's faith in man will be his legacy to posterity.
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C. Reviews


**APPENDIX I**

Transliteration Table

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¹Ye is written initially, after vowels or following the "soft sign." Elsewhere it is replaced by E e.
APPENDIX II

osoblag From osobyi lager', special camp (for political prisoners).

spetstury'ma From spetsial'naya tyur'ma, special prison. The word "special" here has the connotation of "specialist" as applied to engineering or scientific problems.

samizdat This is a pun on Gosizdat from Gosudarstvennaya izdatel'stvo, State Publishing House. Samizdat derives from Samoye izdatel'stvo, "Self" Publishing House. This is the name of the literary underground in the Soviet Union.

The organ of state security in the Soviet Union has been called by various titles since it was first instituted in December 1917, and has been known by the initials of its Russian name. The chronology which follows supplies the initials, dates, Russian and English titles for each stage in the evolution of the secret police organ.

Cheka (1917-1922): Chrezvychainaya komissiya po bor'be s kontrrevolyutsiyei i sabotazhem; Extra­ordinary Commission for the Struggle Against Counter-revolution and sabotage. (Abolished 8 February 1922).

GPU (1922): Gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravleniya; State Political Administration. (Functioned as such from February to December 1922).

OGPU (1922-1934): When the USSR was established in December 1922, the word ob'edinyonnoye (united or consolidated) was prefixed to the title GPU to give the organ all-union functions.

NKVD (1934-1943): Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del; the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.
NKGB (1943-1946): In April 1943 the security functions were divided between the NKVD and the NKGB, the Narodnyi komissariat gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti; People's Commissariat of State Security.

MGB (1946-1953): In 1946 the commissariats were renamed as Ministries. The NKVD became the MVD, the Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, and the NKGB became the MGB, similarly named, the Ministry of State Security.

MVD (1953-1954): In 1953 the ministries were reunited with the name MVD as above, under the jurisdiction of Beria.

KGB (1954 - ) Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti, or Committee of State Security, is the name of the organ at present.

GULAG From Glavnoye upravleniye ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei: Main Administration of Corrective-Labour Camps. This body has since been renamed GUITK: the K signifies Kolonii, Colonies.

OSSO From Osoboye soveshchaniye, Special Collegium or Tribunal. The body usually consisted of three men and was colloquially known as the troika, the Russian word for group of three. The OSSO was attached to the NKVD and handed down sentences without the trouble of a formal trial.

Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic) covered political crimes, which came to be known under Stalin as counter-revolution. The reader will find this Article listed in full in Robert Conquest's book given in the Bibliography. Article 58 was repealed in December 1958.

SMERSH From the words smert' shpionam, literally "Death to Spies." SMERSH existed during World War II as the Counter-espionage section of the NKVD. SMERSH was renamed in 1946 OKR - Otdel kontrrazvedki or Counter-Intelligence Section. SMERSH and OKR were successive names for what had originally (1921) been established as Osobyye otdely, Special Sections of the Internal Affairs apparatus.